

# 2013 PAS Composition Contest Winners

By Brian Nozny

This year marks the 40th annual Percussive Arts Society Composition Contest. Designed to encourage and reward those who create music for percussion instruments and to increase the number of quality compositions written for percussion in various settings, it is one of the most prestigious in the field of percussion music with cash awards totaling \$4,500 distributed each year.

Thirty-three entries were received this year: 17 in the Concert-Style Snare Drum Solo with CD category and 16 in the Steel Pan Ensemble category.

## CATEGORY ONE: CONCERT-STYLE SNARE DRUM SOLO WITH CD

**Judges:** Omar Carmenates, James Campbell, Eugene Novotney, Ben Wahlund

### First Place: "Alter Ego" by Pat Jacobs

Clocking in at 8 minutes and 17 seconds, "Alter Ego" by Pat Jacobs presents the interactions of the solo snare drum and "a distorted reflection of the soloist—an evil twin even." This relationship between the soloist and recorded parts works well due to the organic nature of the material on the CD that was created entirely from recorded sounds of a snare drum. Sounds such as the scraping and shaking of wire snares, striking a detached snare drum rim, and dropping a snare drum down a flight of stairs were then manipulated by the composer to create the soundscape with which the soloist performs. The composer states, "This alter ego echoes, mocks, and often battles with the soloist throughout the composition."

The piece consists of four sections, the first three of which begin with short sections of ambient sounds provided by the CD alone. Then a recorded snare drum enters, fading in one of the main themes of the piece. Throughout the beginning measures, notes are taken out of this theme and given to the solo snare drum until the solo snare drum is finally stating the full theme.

The second section involves new material as well as fragmented material from the first section. This part of the piece begins to explore various sounds of the snare drum including playing on the rim, hand muffling the drum, playing with the snares both off and on, cross-stick technique, and performing on specific areas of the drumhead. This section culminates with an accelerando that leads into the third main section of the piece.

The third section takes materials from the first two sections and develops them between sections of structured improvisation and indeterminacy. This section continues to explore new colors of the snare drum. Beginning with the performer placing the drum upside down on the stand in order to scrape the snares with a guitar pick, the section continues with the performer using brushes on both the head and rim before switching back to sticks. This section ends with a chaotic dialogue between the CD and soloist before moving into the final section with the soloist performing the beginning theme of the work, which is then dismantled and given to the tape part.

"Alter Ego" will be an exciting addition to anyone's repertoire. The combination of diverse colors, challenging dialogue with the soundscape, and driving energy is sure to please audiences and performers alike.

### Second Place: "Bartok Variations" by Jamie Whitmarsh

Taking inspiration from the opening snare drum solo of the second movement of Bartok's "Concerto for Orchestra," Jamie Whitmarsh's "Bartok Variations" is a theme-and-variations work that uses many different elements from the original Bartok piece to create an organic composition that develops the original material in a number of ways.

The piece consists of six variations and a pair of theme statements that bookend the piece. Each variation has its own character, ranging from a duet between the soloist and a recording of the original orchestral snare drum excerpt to

an eclectic variation that references everything from Afro-Cuban drumset to a snare drum excerpt from Rimsky-Korsakov's "Scheherazade." Whitmarsh's exploration of the various sounds of the snare drum includes rimshots, cross-stick technique, open and closed rolls, and playing on the rim of the drum. While these techniques are not revolutionary, Whitmarsh is creative in his use of them, such as some wonderful two-voice writing between the rim and drum in the third variation.

Performers will be challenged by the intricate rhythmic writing as well as the precision needed in coordinating with the CD part. At times they are highly interactive, with both voices having active dialogue with each other. At other times the soloist is given some freedom in terms of breaking away from the CD to perform freely. While these sections are brief, they help to give short bursts of freedom to an otherwise highly coordinated relationship.

It is important to note that the performer is provided a click track to perform with, if desired. This is most beneficial, especially given the intricacy of the CD part as well as the piece as a whole. Numerous meter and tempo changes occur throughout the composition. Combine this with a CD part that is rather spacious at times, and the click track can be almost a necessity.

In "Bartok Variations," Whitmarsh has created an enjoyable work that expands a standard orchestral excerpt to a great extent. At ten minutes in length, this piece would be an excellent choice for anyone looking to program a substantial work for snare drum on his or her next recital.

### Third Place: "T-totum" by Panayiotis Kokoras

Panayiotis Kokoras is a composer with an extensive knowledge of electro-acoustic composition. His piece "T-totum" uses a number of non-traditional methods to create a highly unique and innovative solo for snare drum and electronics.

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Most of the notation for the performer is delivered in a graphic style. The CD part is illustrated in a sonogram with the vertical axis representing the frequency of the signal and the horizontal representing time. Intensity of the signal is represented by the darkness of the signal, with black representing the loudest and white representing silence.

The piece requires a number of non-traditional implements in addition to traditional drumsticks and brushes. Multiple spinning tops, an espresso plate, glass or metal balls, a Superball mallet, and an electric shaker with a paper propeller attached are all incorporated into the piece. Each item is used in interesting ways throughout the work, many of which require the performer to study the detailed instructions provided by the composer.

In addition to instructions on the implements and how to interpret the notation, Kokoras provides specific directions on how to amplify the drum, set up the sound system for the electronic part, and even tune the drum with the head being tightest furthest from the player and gradually looser as it gets closer to the performer.

Many of the sounds created by the performer are very delicate, necessitating the amplification of the drum. Examples of this include dropping multiple spinning tops on the drumhead, twirling an espresso plate on top of the drumhead, and rolling the glass balls against the rim of the drum. The delicacy of these sounds combined with the well-crafted soundscape make for a distinctive work that is sure to be an interesting addition to any program.

## CATEGORY TWO: STEEL PAN ENSEMBLE

**Judges:** Julia Gaines, Tony McCutchen, Leonard Moses, Michael Overman, Larry Snider

### First Place: "Song By Ya Road"

by Sam Naishtat

Sam Naishtat's composition "Song By Ya Road" is a challenging new work for steel band inspired by such prominent pan artists as Andy Narell, Ray Holman, and Boogsie Sharpe. Clocking in at just over 11 minutes, the piece is orchestrated for tenor, double tenor, double second, guitar, cello, and bass pans. While not notated, the composer says that "lively engine room accompaniment in the typical calypso style is appropriate" in addition to a notated drumset part.

As typical of the calypso style, many of the rhythms are highly syncopated. There are also a number of hemiola-type sections where rhythmic patterns are functioning over the barline. These hemiolas occasionally lead to meter changes where the pattern of the pans goes against the drumset player, who is encouraged to maintain the typical soca pattern during these sections. One example of this has the tenor pans playing in multiple patterns of 3/4 while the other pans are in a 6/8 feel, while the drumset continues the typical soca style for more of a 6/4 feel.

Another interesting section of the piece is a chorale written in all of the pans but the tenors, who provide a hemiola-like ostinato against the chorale along with the drumset's continuing soca beat. While dynamics are provided, the composer indicates that it is not necessary to strictly adhere to the specific levels, allowing

directors the freedom to shape the chorale at their discretion.

"Song By Ya Road" is an energetic piece in the Panorama-style of steel band charts. Ensembles will be challenged by its technical aspects as well as by the unique sections mixed into the traditional pan setting.

### Second Place: "Riverside"

by Tyler Swick

Composer and percussionist Tyler Swick's "Riverside" is a beautiful work that feels like it was written for a group of individual pans as opposed to a full steel band. Swick states, "This piece is as much for one to a part as it is for full steel band." Originally beginning as a vibraphone solo, Swick later extended the work to a duet for vibraphone, steel pan, and electronics, before finally developing into a work for steel pan ensemble. The work is dedicated to Dr. Brandon Wood, one of Swick's teachers at the University of Kentucky, who passed away last year.

Scored for lead, double tenor, two double seconds, cello, and bass pans, the piece presents a more delicate and intimate mood than typical steel band charts. Players will need a solid sense of time as many parts, such as the opening measures, involve phrases of intricate eighth-note hocket, making both timing and balancing the voices to sound like one single line a challenge.

While most of the piece has the lead pans presenting the melody, Swick does a nice job of allowing the other sections moments to take on the primary role. One of the composer's goals with the piece was to provide a work in which

## FOCUS DAY 2014: IMAGES OF SOUND: INNOVATIONS IN NOTATION

"To standardize notation is to standardize patterns of thought and the parameters of creativity. Our present abundance of notations is as it should be. It makes our differences more clear." —Sylvia Smith

Notation is a filter through which musicians dialogue with composers. Notation is the result of a divergent projection from the mind of the composer. Notation is communication.

In the 1950s and '60s, thanks to composers such as John Cage, Morton Feldman, Earle Brown, Herbert Brün, and Karlheinz Stockhausen, an explosion of new and creative forms of notation began to challenge the idea of a standardized "musical score." Dots, lines, grids, all manner of imaginative and fanciful shapes/pictures emerged as an alternative to the clef and staff.

There have been several notable publications and exhibitions in the emerging field of creative notation: "Notations" (1968), a landmark anthology edited by John Cage, contained a host of manuscripts representing the varieties of creative notation. Sylvia Smith curated "Scribing Sound," a collection of graphic works from 1952–84, for the Smith Archives at the University of Akron. Also, in 2009 Theresa Sauer created "Notations21," the 21st century's answer to Cage's book, which represented a wealth of new notations, many created and aided by new technology and media.

Proposals are being solicited for the performance of works that utilize innovations in notation in order to expand the boundaries of what are considered musical scores and their interpretation. Premieres of new works are encouraged, as are performances of extant works. Soloists, ensembles, composers, and scholars are invited to send in proposals for performances and presentations.

As always, the committee is interested in the participation of both emerging and established artists. All proposals that meet the criteria and qualify for inclusion on the PASIC 2014 Focus Day will be given complete and careful consideration. Please note: Expenses and the securing of instruments and funding sources will be the sole responsibility of the artist(s) themselves. This includes all logistical and financial considerations associated with the performance. Please prepare and submit your proposal with this consideration in mind.

**Applications being accepted until Dec. 15, 2013 at [www.pas.org](http://www.pas.org).**

**For additional information, please contact: Focus Day 2014 Hosts: John Lane [jlane20@yahoo.com](mailto:jlane20@yahoo.com) or Terry Longshore [longshore@sou.edu](mailto:longshore@sou.edu)**

“every instrument should have a moment to show delicacy as well as gusto.” Though there are many moments of standard homophonic texture, there are also beautiful moments of polyphony and chorale-like textures that help to add diversity to the work.

“Riverside” provides the steel band world with a beautiful, delicate, and heartfelt work that will show the depth, sensitivity, and maturity of any group that chooses to pursue it.

### Third Place: “Quartet No. 1” by Tyler Swick

“Quartet No. 1” by Tyler Swick takes what you would typically think of as a steel drum ensemble and turns it on its ear. Instead of catchy melodies, high-energy rhythmic drive, and the signature sound of a steel drum, “Quartet No. 1” features slowly developing melodies, minimalist rhythmic builds, and the unorthodox use of bare hands in playing the pans in a variety of ways. The result is an original and highly successful take on the steel pan ensemble that is sure to be of interest to any percussion program that owns steel drums.

The piece is scored for one lead, one double second, one cello set, and a pair of bass pans. These instruments act as the center of a multi-percussion setup, one of Swick’s goals in writing the piece. This idea as well as the

self-imposed limitation of excluding a drumset from the piece helps create a unique instrumentation. As Swick puts it, “I really had the mentality that anything can be a multi-setup. So when I wanted to delete the drumset from this ensemble, I had to spread the instruments around to each player. Bass drums, toms, and rim clicks became the new drumset.” In addition to the steel drums in each player’s setup, Player 1 also has individual crotales, Player 2 has individual crotales, a suspended cymbal, and a kick drum, Player 3 has a low tom-tom, and Player 4 has a bass drum.

Overall, the piece has a very minimalist-like style involving a number of rhythmic builds over all of the instruments. The piece begins in 5/4 with the players striking the skirts of the steel drums with their hands, using both an open and closed type of stroke. New colors are slowly added, from pitches of the steel drums played with the hands to the various other percussion instruments. When the pans are then played as we normally hear them, with mallets, the sound is a remarkable contrast and adds a new texture that is quite effective when combined with the added percussive sounds that continue underneath.

Rhythmically the piece will challenge ensembles in a number of ways. Most of the work is performed in a hocket, demanding players

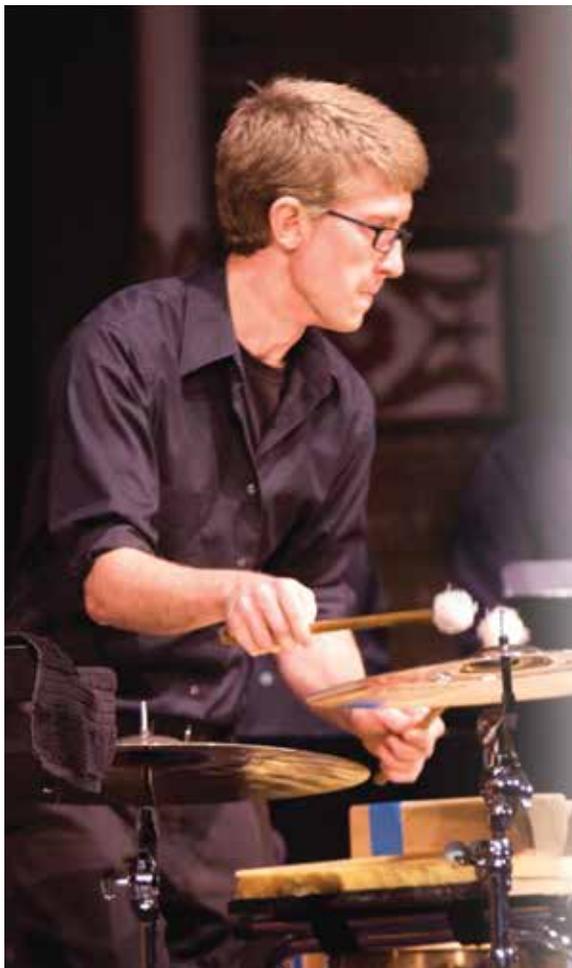
to combine their lines together to form the melody. The piece is predominantly in 5/4 with occasional sections in 3/4. In addition, many sections of the piece revolve around dotted eighth-note figures, which can be a challenge given the lack of a repeating pulse from a single player. One 3/4 section of the work involves a number of 3-against-4 polyrhythms.

“Quartet No. 1” is a highly innovative chamber work for steel pans that is sure to be rewarding to any chamber ensemble. The traditional steel drum demands are minimal, meaning that even players with little steel drum experience can approach this piece.

### 2014 CATEGORIES

The categories for the 2014 Percussive Arts Society Composition Contest are Duet for Multiple Percussion (small to medium setup) and Woodwind Instrument, and Medium Percussion Ensemble (5–8 players) with CD.

**Brian Nozny** is a percussionist, composer, and educator residing in Troy, Alabama, where he is on the music faculty at Troy University. **PN**



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